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THE REDISTRIBUTION OF THE LABOR NOW EMPLOYED IN PRODUCING WAR SUPPLIES

By HAVILAND H. LUND

New York City

Your President not only honored me by inviting me to address your Association in annual convention, but he provided me with my introductory paragraph, which probably contains the meat of my address. In his letter of invitation he said:

It looks as though one of our acute problems would be the redistribution of the labor force now employed in producing supplies for the warring nations. Any opportunities that can be developed in the country districts will help solve that problem. Students are all agreed, I believe, that one of the important factors in solving a similar problem for us at the close of the American Civil War, when a couple of million men were turned loose from the armies to find remunerative employment, was the homestead laws of 1862 and 1864 making it easy for men to go onto the land. This absorbed a vast quantity of what would otherwise have been surplus labor. Unless we have some policy worked out, I think we are going to have some difficulty in absorbing the surplus labor force occasioned by the closing down of munition factories and other establishments that are supplying the warring nations. The politicians in Washington, I am afraid, will never solve the problem. There seems to be a disposition on their part to hide their heads in the sand and say that they do not see any problem.

Of course, a certain percentage of these munition workers will remain in the munition business to prepare our own defensives, but a properly organized campaign among these workers at the present time would result in a large percentage of them preparing to settle in rural communities after the war. The enormous cost of living, labor troubles, and the diminishing farm production all point to the settlement of our vacant acres as the only logical solution of this problem. The present imitation prosperity induced by the war has brought about unusual activity in land selling. The factories and munition camps are overrun with salesmen and literature. The only interest these men have is in getting the biggest possible cash payment on the land; leaving the man enough for his equipment and running expenses never enters into their calculation. You all know how this works out. Most of the purchasers lose their money; the state to which they migrate is the worse for their failure; and nobody wins but the land broker. Unless these selling agents can find their place in a sane plan for placing men upon the land, we shall find it cheaper to pension them and save the earnings of our working people. The interests of the banker, the railroad, the merchant, the land owner, and the man purchasing land are identical. Just one man must be put in his place or eliminated, and that man is the land broker. You are all aware

of the havoc he has wrought in the western states. At recent hearings held in San Francisco by the market commissioner it was demonstrated that no one is now making money by farming unless he purchased his land several years ago before it was priced so high. The report of these hearings should teach us a lesson. High-priced agricultural land means that farmers will fail and leave the state, with nothing good to say for it.

It is not impossible to standardize land selling. In all directions we are hearing how this, that, and the other thing should be investigated by a commission, and the amount of profit to be made by the men in that line of business indicated, if not controlled, by the commission's report. An editorial in *Collier's* of December 5 says: "If the distribution of food from those who grow and prepare it to those who use it is not a public utility, then there is no such thing." If the distribution of food is a public utility, how much more is the distribution of land, which is the basis of food production?

The Forward-to-the-Land League has been preaching for four years the necessity of standardizing land values, controlling the profit on land, and placing people in organized rural communities in groups of at least fifty families each, so that it will be a business proposition to furnish them those things necessary for their contentment, happiness, and prosperity. If the price of food is regulated, as well as light, heat, transportation, and other public utilities, why this reluctance to standardize and control that which is the basis of all our industrial fabric, namely, the price of agricultural land? How is it possible to bring food within the limits of reasonable price, unless the land itself is susceptible of the same regulation? It is really not as difficult as it would seem; it is chiefly a matter of arousing public opinion to the necessity of such control, and showing a plan by which control can be secured. No group of men in the United States has greater power in determining that this be done than you who are here assembled. Our progressive business men are more and more coming to see that they must consult with scientists before determining economic questions. One of the most valuable things that this Association can do, in my opinion, is to reach out a sympathetic, helping hand to the business men and make yourselves available to their commercial needs.

Only the most progressive in both classes yet see the necessity of working together. In the department of land alone, untold millions can be saved to our working people by protecting their home-purchasing power, through the creation of authoritative sources of land information, free from political or commercial control. Certain leading

Socialists do not think it wise to put colonization into government bureau control.

The next step is to prove to the landowner that it pays him to meet in counsel experts in rural economics, in the same way as the manufacturer calls in the chemist and engineer. Such coöperation will enable our people to move, in community groups, upon the vacant acres so greatly needing their labor. Business men are not accustomed to believe that a professor of rural economics knows more about agricultural settlement than the commercial colonization man. Is anything more important than for them to realize that he does? If the members of this organization will talk and write for their understanding, they will understand. The subject needs to be discussed in the vocabulary of the business man, not of the academic man.

What happens when working people invest the savings of a lifetime and lose them? Some of them commit suicide; some of them become discouraged and live on charity; all of them become bitter and discontented, and so the ranks of the socialists and anarchists are recruited. It is useless to argue against socialism; all the people know is that they suffer and are desperate; that there is no outlook for their children. They demand a change. But, gentlemen, the moment they possess deeds to their own homes there is no need of argument. The question settles itself automatically because hope is born again. You ask, "Will these people go into farm communities?" I answer from actual knowledge, "Yes, they will."

The Forward-to-the-Land League conducted a bureau of information in New York City during the past year, and night classes in agriculture and household economics were taught. These classes were conducted by the Extension Department of the State Agricultural College. Our lecturers said that they had larger and more enthusiastic audiences in our city classes than anywhere else. When you complain of the exodus from the rural districts to the city, remember these one-time farmers are still living in towns and in many instances they are the first who wish to return to the land. Their city experience, whether successful or unsuccessful, has enriched and broadened their minds. They know something of teamwork. They are accustomed to be a part of a whole, accustomed to work as a cog in a wheel under expert direction. Therefore it is easier to bring about coöperation among these prospective farmers than it is among those who remained at home. We have a registration card that is distributed among attendants of our classes and correspondents:

APPLICATION FOR FARM HOME

Surname_____Christian name_____

Street and number_____

City_____State_____

Married or single_____Education_____

Ages of all members of family_____

Country of nativity_____Did you farm there?_____

How many years in this country?_____

In what state do you wish to farm?_____

What kind of farming is preferred?_____

What experience have you had in agriculture?_____

Would you join a night class in agriculture?_____

What is your religion?_____

What amount of capital is available?_____

Occupation?_____

Seventy-five per cent of our city registration have had farm experience here or abroad. People coming to us personally assure us that they want to go upon the land, but that they do *not* wish to go to isolated farms. The immigrants, accustomed as they are abroad to living in rural communities and going out to their farms to work, do not take kindly to the American idea of farm life, and the poorest peasant who comes is as ambitious for his children as are you and I. They will put up with anything in the city rather than deprive their children of educational opportunities. But when these people hear of our plans for sending them out in groups of at least fifty families each, where there is a model rural school with vocational and social equipment, where there will be an agricultural instructor who can teach them the most scientific methods of production and attend to marketing their products in a wholesale business-like way, they, appreciating the value of this business organization because of their business experience, can clearly see that there is a chance for them to be both prosperous and happy, and to become the immediate possessors of homes, and they are keen for it. From publicity sent throughout the United States about this colonization work, one story has brought 700 letters. They came from practically every state in the Union, as well as from Canada, Nova Scotia, and Alaska, asking for the opportunity of moving into such colony groups.

You will next ask, "Why, if this is true, do they not go?" I answer that, with the present cost of living, it is impossible for the man who is earning even large wages to save sufficient capital to buy land and equipment and start himself on a farm. Their savings average from \$200 to \$2000. The bulk of them fall in between \$500 and \$600. It takes at least \$2000 to finance a small farm and we always allow \$2500. What chance has a man with this small capital to go out alone upon a farm and succeed? We have constantly discouraged the

man with small savings from buying land unless he could go out in such an organized community, so sure are we that he would lose his savings by so doing. Exceptional men succeed with small capital, but the average man fails. We have found that men are willing to go upon the land if the equipment is right. Therefore, it is a question of money and organization to bring about this distribution of labor in the rural districts. The recent credit bill passed does nothing for this class of people. It helps only the man who is fairly affluent. And it gives this man no advantage as to the amount of money he can borrow upon his land, for mortgage and life insurance companies have long lent as high as 50 per cent to 60 per cent on valuation, the only improvement being better terms as to time and interest. We must have a system of rural credits that will finance the tenant and the farm laborer, and the city man with small savings, before we can move any appreciable body of people.

What is the solution? You have probably heard many landowners and business men say that they are willing to extend enormous credit to the "right kind of people," but until the Forward-to-the-Land League worked out the plans for a bureau of information no machinery existed by which the right kind of man could be selected from the wrong kind and placed in touch with the credit opportunities. As the League is organized as a non-profit making association under state supervision and cannot buy or sell land, it inspires the confidence of the purchaser. It also creates a clearing house for the enormous amount of agricultural and home-welfare information, which the government has collected, but which is not generally available since the mass of people do not know that it exists. We try to show people value to the landowner and to the communities wanting to settle up their back country; and we try to show land values to the people wanting farms. We inspect soil, title, contracts, etc., before recommending land. Business men in a dozen different states have informed us that they are willing to extend from 75 per cent to 90 per cent credit to prospective farmers under our plan. They realize that an organized group with an expert director is a safe investment, when the individual family would not be. They realize that people farming and marketing under expert direction give the first and basic credit value; namely, rural organization.

Now that the Hollis Bill has been passed, the first question confronting farmers is the organization of the rural community. Organization must take place before they can avail themselves of the capital apportioned for this work; therefore, when we suggest taking

fifty families, the majority of whom have had farm experience and recognize the value of organization and coöperation, and start as an organized unit on farms that have been fully equipped by capital wanting to bring this people-value into the back country, we have brought into being that first requisite for credit, namely, organization before their settlement instead of after. Many people say, "You do too much for these people; you leave nothing for them to accomplish by their own initiative; they should begin at the bottom and work up." Yet these same people are striving for rural credit legislation that will enable a man somehow or somewhere to borrow money with which to purchase this equipment for his farm. Is it any different to turn the credit problem around, and say to the business men in the community where vacant land abounds, "Organize land and construction corporations, appoint a competent manager, each business man subscribe for as much stock—the profit being limited—as he feels able to carry to help bring about the scientific colonization in your country"? This divides the credit burden among those who are benefited by the people and agricultural increase which follow the equipping of this colony unit. We stipulate that each colony provide the following:

1. At least fifty farms fully equipped as to houses, barns, fences, wells, etc. Minimum of at least five acres per farm cleared. Agricultural implements, horse or mule, one cow, one dozen chickens, and two pigs on each farm.
2. An agricultural instructor and market expert.

Our bureau applicants move into these farms as an organized unit under contract to follow the instructions of the agricultural director until their debt is paid. It is thus possible to treat these fifty separate holdings as a business unit and market in carload lots. Loneliness and waste are eliminated.

Wherein does this differ essentially from trying to get legislation for personal credit that individuals may purchase their equipment? These colonists have only enough on the farm to begin. There is plenty of opportunity for initiative and leadership, and further organization. They have simply been furnished tools with which to begin farming. We do not expect carpenters or painters to go to work without tools, or to work half equipped until they have money enough to buy further equipment, nor do we expect people in the city to earn the money to establish their own schools and build moving-picture theatres. They are expected only to pay their share of the taxes or rent and the price of admission to the picture show. The model rural school should have moving-picture and lantern equipment.

It costs very little. Amusements patronized by the working class in the city are not expensive amusements. Railroads recognize these facts and are glad to share with landowners the extra expense of the vocational training and recreation in these rural communities.

It being true that the people wish to go to the land, and that the business men are willing to extend the credit by which they can go, are you asking why then has not the Forward-to-the-Land League established many such colonies? I answer, because the work is constantly interfered with. Whoever attempts to do a progressive thing in the industrial world, runs against vested interests. Shortsighted men feel that if they cannot make money in the way they have always made it they are out of the game; people refuse to readjust themselves to a better plan of people distribution as hand workers fought machinery. Our experience has been similar to that of a group of men who some years ago started a bureau of land information in one of our western states. The story was told me by one of the editors of the *Country Gentleman*. They were persecuted and finally prosecuted; a "frame up" case nearly landed them in the penitentiary. After their escape from this the legislature passed a bill shutting them out. Thus did the land speculator and the politician, who are usually one and the same, put an end to honest land information in that particular state. I have found that railroad presidents and higher officials are in favor of our plan. They invariably state that their colonization work has been for years expensive and ineffective, but with the exception of a few, the men at the head of the colonization departments have refused to coöperate, feeling that any plan that differed from their own must be wrong. These professional colonization men make me think of the old lady who was a "Sarah Gamp" in her neighborhood. The neighbors usually submitted to her ministrations when there was any sickness and she was terribly aggrieved when one of her friends summoned a trained nurse for her child who had diphtheria. The "Sarah Gamp" person felt much insulted and said, "Don't I know how to nurse children with diphtheria? Haven't I lost nine children from it?" Again we have certain commercial organizations and certain political organizations with more or less of a welfare program behind them who wish to conduct colonization or immigration departments, and who employ quite a number of people on generous salaries for this work. These are reluctant to give up their salaries and generally have not wished to coöperate in any plan which did not originate and center within their own organization. We in the Forward-to-the-Land League have wanted the coöperation of all now interested in the

work in the usual commercial or welfare channels. A rational plan of land selling does not necessarily mean the employment of fewer people. On the contrary it would make room for many more. It merely means a readjustment. It means making all of the work done by the state and federal government agencies, welfare organizations, commercial organizations, articulate, and places at the disposal of each the bureau of information which should be conducted in every principal city in the United States and Europe. Why should not the railroad colonization departments confine their work to helping organize better credit and marketing facilities on their roads?

An organization for people-getting should not be closely associated with railroads or land agents. It arouses suspicion. There is a prejudice against railroads among working people, and there is a justifiable prejudice against land agencies. For this reason every honest land dealer should be (and in most cases is) glad to help establish some source of authoritative land information that will put the hall-mark upon the honest land deal as against the dishonest.

The logical source of revenue for the conduct of these bureaus of information is yearly dues from commercial organizations and from the conduct of permanent land exhibits in our principal cities. Such land exhibits should be non-commercial in character, should show the agricultural products of every state, and be free to the public. We have written to the governors and agricultural colleges about this and have had a splendid response. It is not difficult to establish these permanent land exhibits, but again the commercial land man opposes us. He wants these short-lived land shows upon which he makes profit to continue their sporadic existence; and as our organization offers no great profit to anybody, nor political power, we have found it very difficult to secure the necessary finances for our work. It needs merely to be underwritten. It will be self-supporting when once it is going.

Our work has been before the public for the past four years. Portions of its program have been incorporated in the work of several organizations and different departments of government, but none of them has accomplished much, simply because the program is valuable only when it is used as a whole.

I realize that it is natural for every government department head to reach out for more money for his budget, which means more power and prestige and pleasure in the work; and university men in large numbers are advocating that the state and government take over colonization. Why are they less afraid of a bureaucracy here than in Germany or

Russia? Heredity monarchs created bureaucracies because bureaucracies are the logical machinery for the operation of autocratic power. In the United States we are watching the weird anomaly of a bureaucracy being built by radicals under the name of "government ownership." Many people are suffering from the hallucination that the people *are* the government. If human nature in its workaday needs could live up to its ideal, that would be true. But humanity is much the same throughout the centuries. Power begets thirst for more power, and tyranny takes possession in exact ratio to its opportunity. President Gompers said something like this in a recent number of the *Federationist*—"It is of the nature of the government to exercise power and to create more power and to extend the right of compulsion in order to make the activities of government more effective."

It is amazing that the unscrupulous politician has not long ago joined forces with the Socialist in his demand that the government conduct the business of the nation. These radicals, so deeply in earnest to secure the betterment of the people, will find government ownership a "wooden horse of Troy."

Better pause in this clamor for centralization and see whether our forefathers were not wise in distributing power into many self-governing groups. Friction? Yes. Delays? Yes, but also democracy. This friction under state rights and local government makes it impossible for one group to dominate everything. It is inevitable that one group will dominate each local center of government, inevitable that one man will dominate each group.

Recognizing that human nature after all determines the manner in which theories must work, and remembering that astute politicians, backed by selfish business interests, have in the past operated in both political parties for the perpetuation of their power, remembering how they simply played upon the jealousies of rival factions to keep their control, let us refrain from enlarging their opportunities. It is sad to watch the machinery of bureaucracy being lovingly and blindly built by the apostles of the greater freedom.

I confess that I am frightened at the present political outlook. Bills are up in several states and before the federal government providing for a government controlled colonization. Unless business men find a way quickly to grant adequate rural credit through channels of private enterprise, we shall find all this business centered in the government. Had I more faith in the politician than in the landowner and banker, could I believe that they will deal more fairly with the poor than will private enterprise, I too would shout for the government to

take over the whole system. The enthusiast demanding government ownership usually denounces the politician in the same breath. I ask who will administer all this new business for the government if not the politician? We shall surely need to breed a new type of politician if we are to get any result other than that now open to examination in the government service.

You will recall that some years ago the Department of Labor was permitted the use of the immigrant head tax. This privilege was so abused that Congress took the power from them and that money has gone on accumulating till it now amounts to about ten millions of dollars. Shall we put still greater opportunity for corruption in the way of the officials of that department? However trustworthy the present incumbents of office may be, how do they know that their successors will not be the same sort that abused the former trust?

To read the history of how the politicians managed land owned by the state of New York is illuminating. It illustrates the facility with which they can withhold such land from the use of those entitled to it. Is it not likely that the landlord will be appointed land commissioner? And is it likely that the landlord is unwilling to sell his land to the state (presumably at a fair profit) and then resell in the capacity of land commissioner (at a good salary) to the small purchaser? It should be remembered that for the government to handle land selling in our country differs in the nature of things from the problem presented by other governments. Our government is dual. We are getting badly mixed up over this once clearly defined duality. At present there are senseless duplications and consequent waste in many departments of the state and federal governments. Mr. Charles A. Stanton, president of the American Appraisement Association, explained very fully before the Fresno Chamber of Commerce recently why the Irish and Australian systems are not opportune for California. He said:

I cannot but feel amused when I find both the Irish Land bills and the Australian land system suggested at the same time as a model for colonization in California. The purposes of the two are so diametrically opposite that their application to our present colonization situation, as I look at it, would give us in the Australian system a system that is over a hundred years behind our times; and in the Irish bill would give us a system that is about two hundred and fifty years ahead of our times. If you will permit, I will try to show you how I draw my conclusions. The area of Australia is about equal to that of the United States, with a population of about 7,000,000 to compare with our population of 100,000,000. Under these circumstances, Australia is very much in the same position that the United States was in over a hundred years ago, and, while the United States, being primarily an immigration country, has very successfully managed to colonize her lands by private ventures, yet Australia, on account of her isolated position in the

world, finds herself confronted with colonization problems that are beyond the reach of private enterprises, especially as such a large percentage of her vast agricultural area is government land, which is far from the position of the United States today. Therefore, I claim that state colonization in Australia and the government aid extended in her rural credit system directed to help state colonization is an economic necessity for the colonization of her government lands. We might have used the Australian system to some advantage over a hundred years ago, but now, since all of the best of our government land has been taken up and our population continues to increase just the same, it is evident that we have passed the government colonization stage that is now confronting Australia.

In Ireland the situation is entirely different from Australia. There state colonization is a necessity due to her congested population and limited agricultural area. For the information of those not familiar with state colonization in Ireland, I wish to state that Ireland, with its area not exceeding that of Riverside and San Bernadino counties, with population equal to that of all the states west of Nebraska, has for centuries been burdened with large landed estates and absentee landlords. Considerable legislation, running over a period of fifty years, has culminated in what is now known as the "Irish Land Bill" by which the British government empowers a royal commission, known as the Estates Commissioners, to take over these large estates and colonize them. This royal commission, using the credit of the British government, and also appropriations from the British parliament, has full power to purchase at its own appraisal such lands as they deem suitable for colonization, have them improved, and have them sold without any cash down, under the amortization plan, extending payment over a period of fifty years or more. This bill has already involved the credit of the British government to the extent of \$700,000,000, which will be increased from time to time until all the lands are taken over, and which in all probability will remain a permanent debt against the people of Ireland. No other royal commission in the world has more power to use the credit of the government than that which has been granted to the Estates Commissioners under the Irish Land Bill of Great Britain. Do you think any such commission, with its unlimited land purchasing power, would be practical or even possible in the state of California?

Let us admit that state colonization in Ireland is an economic necessity and that we will adopt state colonization in California as soon as it becomes an economic necessity. In order to determine when this economic necessity will arise in California, we must proceed as follows: In sixty-seven years the state of California, approximately 100,000,000 acres in area, has developed itself from a wild, isolated, and unsettled territory to a prosperous state with a population of approximately 2,500,000 people, a growth that is unparalleled in the history of states and nations. California today has one person for every forty acres of land.

Ireland, with an approximate area of 21,000,000 acres, after having had many centuries for her growth and development, notwithstanding that she has supplied the world with 5,000,000 immigrants during the past fifty years, has a population of approximately 6,000,000 people. Ireland today has one person for every three and one half acres of land.

Mr. Stanton, from whom I have just quoted, believes in the principle of American colonization and is now organizing an appraisal corporation, known as the American Appraisement Association. The primary object of this appraisal corporation is to standardize our agricultural appraisal service. I believe this is an essential factor in the proper distribution of agricultural land. From his many years of appraisal work and colonization, he has evolved a scientific appraisal system based upon local agricultural statistics, which is prac-

tical in its application to all agricultural sections. His system has been approved by our best authorities and I suggest that you write him at 96 Broadway, New York, and secure his literature, which explains his system.

Two years ago I presented the plans of our League for credit and colonization to the officials of the Labor Department. They said at that time that they thought this work should all be done through that department, but finally agreed with us that it would be best to create a coördinating bureau in the Department of Labor and let that bureau articulate with the League's Bureau of Land Information, so that our bureau would be a thing apart from political control. At the invitation of the officials of the Labor Department a committee of five from our League was appointed to confer with the officials from the Agricultural and Labor departments and the Reclamation Service, with a view to close coöperation. The nature of this coöperation was defined in an official letter to us. We were granted two conferences of an hour and a half each, but later these officials decided that the government should go into the colonization business. They ignored, without explanation, their promise of coöperation with us, and later certain of these officials endorsed Congressman Crosser's colonization bill now before Congress.

I wish that all of you present would read this bill. With all Europe organized for concentrated effort, with centralized control, where shall we be in this country unless we too organize? We must if we are to meet their competition. Does this mean that we are to pattern our industrial organization after Germany as the Allies are doing? Shall we through private enterprise bring about the coöperation that is necessary to preserve our democracy, and yet meet competition on the only basis upon which it can be met? You in this organization have a big voice in determining our industrial future.

I have been in one of the large cities of the South for the past several weeks and my experience there is a concrete example of what must be met if we are to place any considerable number of people in farming communities. I first spoke at the board of trade; about twenty men were present; they thought the message of value, and called another meeting next day at which about eighty men were present. At this meeting a committee of fifteen was appointed. This committee endorsed the plans of the League and passed a resolution to raise \$250,000 for the first colony. Then the commercial colonization men, interested in stopping this movement, interfered with our work and nothing more was done for several months. I was obliged to leave the city and

when I returned later we had a mass meeting at which the mayor and prominent citizens spoke. We appealed to the churches and welfare organizations, women's clubs, commercial organizations, etc., and asked their coöperation in raising the necessary funds. Committees were appointed from all these organizations to coöperate with us. Many of the presidents of the religious organizations and clubs were willing to assist in the sale of stock. One of the railroads offered a large tract of land for colonization purposes, stating that it was willing to accept any price for the land which should be set by an appraisement committee to be selected by the representatives of these several organizations. And then the inevitable happened. A certain group of land men and commercial colonization men began to break up the work and succeeded in convincing the committee that it was unwise to go on with these plans. However, the railroad and many of the bankers and prominent people rallied to the League's standard and are determined to go ahead and create this colony. The great argument against the League's plan is that we have established no colonies. This makes about the fifth time that a colony was about ready and each and every time this same interference has made it impossible to go on. The only way that the program can be "put over," gentlemen, is by the rallying of those who are not interested commercially in the sale of land, or in the lending of money upon the land, to some one plan of action regarding the distribution of people, and thus of holding up our hands.